

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application and indicating that claim 1 is allowable and that claim 5 contains allowable subject matter.

Disposition of Claims

Claims 1-9 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 2 are independent. The remaining claims depend directly from independent claim 2. Claim 5 has been cancelled by this reply.

Claim Amendments

Independent claim 2 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of cancelled claim 5. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2, 4, and 6-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,987,041 (“Masuda”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,236,392 (“Inamori”). Independent claim 2 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of cancelled claim 5. Thus, amended independent claim 2 is allowable over the cited references. Further, dependent claims 4 and 6-9 now depend from allowable independent claim 2, and thus, are also allowable over the cited references. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

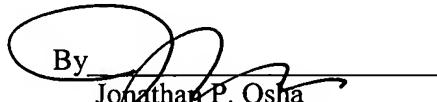
Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Masuda in view of Inamori and U.S. Patent No. 6,369,830 (“Brunner”). Independent claim 2 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of cancelled claim 5. Thus, amended independent claim 2 is allowable over the cited references. Further, dependent claim 3 now depends from allowable independent claim 2, and thus, is also allowable over the cited references. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 04995/125001).

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Respectfully submitted,

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